1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

WOMEN AT WORK

5

Tenemi made ready to carve a calabash dish. She sat down on her work stool, and on the ground beside her she put down a small knife, a piece of broken glass, and half of a calabash shell. The inner pulp had just been removed, and both the inside and outside of the gourd were of a pale green color. She had dipped it in water before she brought it here, and now with the point of her knife she deftly marked her design. The curves in the center, covering almost the entire inner surface, formed the body of a woman, she said, who was big with child. The geometric tracings in parallel narrow lines across one portion of the top was the Aboma snake, euphemistically called the G'an Tetei, the great creeper, or vine. Taking up the piece of glass, she began to scrape away carefully the soft pulp inside the outlines of her design.

In the entire village there was no woman who worked faster at carving calabash dishes than did Tenemi. In less than half an hour the dish was ready to be placed on the high platform where the maripa nuts were drying. With the sun upon it, the calabash would turn a deep cream color, but where the knife had borne down, it would show a golden brown, and where the glass had scraped away the pulp, the color would be a paler gold, so pale that it would be almost the cream of the unornamented outer surface.

"The large closed gourds are not done fast. Those are carved on the outside, and must be worked cleverly. But this does not take long. I am making this for you. When it is finished I will bring it to you. You must give it to your girl-child when she grows big."

She herself had made four children, but only two of them were living. The oldest, a daughter, carried a child in her womb. Tomorrow she would come to the village, and Tenemi would bring her.

"She was afraid to come. Women who are with child must be very careful."

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

We took particular pains to gather as much information 163
as possible on fecundity, infant mortality, and the death-rate of mothers in childbirth. Sixty women were questioned. The fecundity we found to be variable; one of the women claimed to have borne twelve children—the highest number encountered—and some had no offspring at all. The usual number of children was found to be two or three. Interestingly enough, there is a low infant mortality; that is to say, a low death-rate for infants during the first six months after birth, but a high child mortality. The higher death-rate occurs 165
among children from the ages of two to six years. There 844
seemed to be a considerable number of premature births, and deaths of mothers at the time of birth or shortly thereafter are numerous. After much questioning, we found this to be one of the grievances of the Djukas, for they consider the Dutch medical authorities could do a great deal in alleviating such a condition. The precautions surrounding the mother at the time of childbirth or shortly thereafter are very crude and they may lead to infections and end in death by puerperal sepsis. 164
844
[852]

The birth of a child is usually the occasion for some slight celebration. The umbilical cord is severed with a knife (unsterilized, of course) and buried behind the hut. The placenta is thrown into the river. *Trismus neonatorum,* a tetanus infection by way of the umbilical cord, occasionally occurs, due to the extremely unclean conditions surrounding parturition. As can be seen from the photographs, some of the Djuka children suffer from umbilical hernia, because the cord is

B R The beliefs of both, attributing illnesses to
/516 cont./
743 supernatural causes, did not predispose them to turn to European
648 doctors. Moreover, the Saint-Laurent hospital was so far away
[753] (six days paddling downstream) that a seriously ill person had plenty of time to die en route. The Boni went there only as a last resource and in general at the point of death. As for the Oayana,
B R not a single one presented himself there before 1950.

744 In 1936-1939 several circuits had been made from the post
648 of La Forestière located at the mouth of the river, but no consistent
[743] medical action had been feasible. Not until 1949 was it possible
B to create a medical center in the country itself, at Maripasoula.
R The populations were visited regularly, and the seriously ill could
[164] be hospitalized on the spot. At the same time systematic spraying with DDT inside all the huts, destroying the anthropophile anopheles, changed the environmental conditions considerably; if malaria has not disappeared, it has ceased, both among the
B Indians and among the Boni children, to be the principal cause of
R morbidity.

743 The action of the medical center has been exercised more on
744 the Boni, who live a few hours by canoe from Maripasoula, than on
648 the Oayana. Among the latter, the principal villages are two days
[484] journey by motorboat upstream amidst difficult waterfalls; the
[753] Indians are often on the move, fishing on the upper courses of the rivers or visiting their relatives on Brazilian rivers; it has happened several times that the circuits of the doctors and medical attendants (one per trimester on the average) do not find anybody in the villages; incidentally, the Oayana tend to attribute
R all internal ailments to magical causes, consulting willingly only
[844] for wounds. They willingly accept the remedies given on the spot, but rarely take the initiative of moving a sick person to Maripasoula; the women continue to have their babies delivered
R in the villages, without any hygiene.

757 Only during the last three or four years has a change in
165 attitude been noticeable among them vis-à-vis medicine; as we
B shall show below, no notable modification in their mortality has
R yet been observed as a result of this fact.

121 The principal interest of this study being to compare the
● 165 demographic data of two populations before they had been modified

B
R /516 cont./
121 by the effect of medical care, we shall take 1 January 1950 as the
165 date of reference for the calculations of mortality among the Boni.

/517/

II. — Demography of the Boni

Census. — Estimation of Age.

B
125 Method used. The demographic study of the Boni presents the difficulties inherent in all populations without civil records:

1. Difficulty of determining the ages of individuals;
2. Difficulty of determining for each woman the deceased children in relation to the surviving ones.

B
125 We attempted to establish a local chronology by linking the
173 ages of individuals to events of known date that had stuck in their minds.

More particularly we fixed the ages of the old men from the voyage of the explorer Crevaux (1877) and from the death of the grand man Anato (1891), the ages of middle-aged persons from events which occurred between 1915 and 1924, death of the grand man Ochi (1915), end of World War I (1918), hydroplane accident at the mouth of the Inini (1921), installation of a rose-wood factory (1925).

B
125 The persons born after 1930 were placed without difficulty, for we knew a certain number of them as children or adolescents in 1948.

Starting with a certain number of men whose age could be
B fixed with considerable accuracy, all the others, men and women,
829 were placed by comparison. In fact, if the Boni do not know their age, they are able to say that they are, for example, two or three years younger than so-and-so (6).

B
755 6. Their attention is brought to bear on these age differences because, if a group isolated in the bush is led to address a prayer to the ancestors for the curing of a sick person, this prayer has to be pronounced by the oldest person.

/522/

165 Mortality. The principal interest of this study is to establish the
128 curve of survival showing, for 100 children born alive, the number surviving at one year, five years, ten years, etc., until the extinction of the group. The life expectancy at birth is given by this curve.

For the Boni, we can make this study with the assumption that the lives of the individuals stopped on the first of January 1950, the date on which one may consider that the conditions which influence mortality have changed, above all as far as the children are concerned.

The study of the mortality of the children born since the first of January 1950, dealt with in part, will furnish useful elements of comparison.

Establishment of the mortality table. Taking up again the records of the 193 women whose lives are completely known to us, and including the children who died in early infancy (10), we have marked down all their children, year by year, on a table.

165 Table of Mortality Referring to 1 January 1950 (10)

Year of birth	Deceased children			Surviving on 1-1-50	Surviving Total children	Average age on 1-1-50	Deceased between 1-1-50 & 1-1-58
	0-1 year	0-5 years	More than 5 before 1-1-50				
						years	
1888 – 1899 inclus.	12 (36 %)	13 (39 %)	5	16	16/33 = 48 %	50	2
1900 – 1909 inclus.	15 (28 %)	20 (37 %)	8	26	26/54 = 48 %	45	1
1910 – 1919 inclus.	21 (24 %)	30 (35 %)	8	47	47/85 = 55 %	35	1
1920 – 1929 inclus.	20 (21 %)	28 (31 %)	7	59	59/94 = 62 %	25	3
1930 – 1939 inclus.	24 (24 %)	32 (30 %)	8	66	66/106 = 63 %	15	3
1940 – 1949 inclus.	40 (23 %)	.....	1	122	122/175 = 70 %	5	8

165 128 [856] [862] 10. We were particularly careful in asking about children who died in early infancy, an important cause of error in populations without civil records. The age of the children at the time of death has been estimated according to the following guidelines based on the study

/521 cont./

165 128 856 862 10. (cont.) of the development of ten children born in 1956 and 1957: sitting up, 7 months; beginning to walk, 1 year (a remarkably clear guideline among the Boni); end of weaning, 14 to 18 months. Beyond that, the ages were estimated by comparison with children living at the time of the inquiry.

165 The survival curve results directly from these values. It shows the high mortality of children (30% during the first five years).

165 /522/ It is not possible to obtain directly a value for the survival
128 rate for ages beyond 55 years, but it is possible to obtain an approximate value from the age pyramid. Calculation (11) gives: proportion surviving at the age of 70: 30%.

11. The calculation consists of comparing the lengths of the segments of the average curve of the pyramid corresponding to the ages 55 and 70, having taken into account the increase in births between 1888 and 1903, deduced from the rate of reproduction.

165 Table of Mortality Referring to January 1958

Year of birth	Deceased before 1-1-50	Deceased between 1-1-50 & 1-1-58	Surviving on 1-1-58	Proportion Surviving	Average age on 1-1-58
				%	Years
1888-1899 inclus...	18	2	14	41	65
1900-1909 inclus...	28	1	25	46	54
1910-1919 inclus...	38	1	46	54	44
1920-1929 inclus...	35	3	56	59	24
1930-1939 inclus...	40	3	64	59	24
1940-1949 inclus...	53	8	114	65	14
1950-1957 inclus....	.....	45, of which 35 under 1 year	154	77.5	4

5: Hurault--19 KE-5 (1948-1959) 1959 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Archives 57.12

/522 cont./

165 Life expectancy at birth is about 43 years. It is a remarkably high value for peoples deprived of medical help, and notably superior to that noted in Black Africa.

[758] Evolution of mortality under the influence of medical assistance. It is interesting to show the extent to which mortality has been influenced by medical assistance since 1950. For this purpose we shall reconsider the same observations, taking into account the deaths which intervened between the first of January 1950 and the first of January 1958, the date to which we shall relate the calculations.

The survival curve obtained by stopping the calculations on the first of January 1958 differs slightly from the preceding one, which principally concerns the mortality of children. The mortality from 0 to 1 year is given by 35/199 = 17.5% instead

/523/

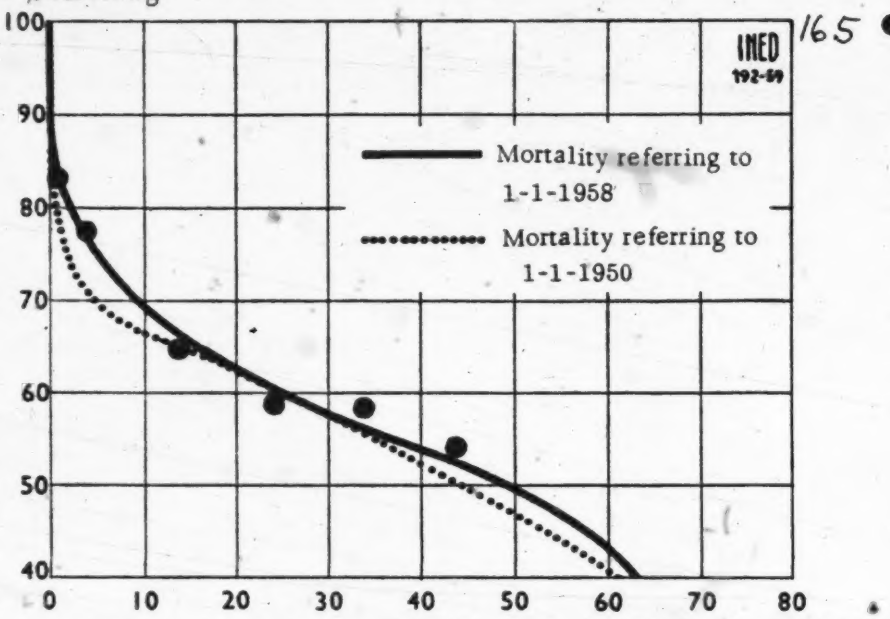

Diagram No. 3. Curve of survival for the Boni, taking 1 January 1958 as the date of reference

of 23%. The mortality from 0 to 5 years has fallen from 30% to 24%. The mortality of adults has been slightly reduced. As a whole the life expectancy of the Boni appears to have increased by approximately one year during the period considered.

Increase of population. From the survival curve it is possible for us to calculate the rate of reproduction of the population.

Women born from	Rate of reproduction	
1860 - 1895	$0.485 \times \frac{7,30}{100} \times \frac{57}{100} = \frac{201}{100}$	31 years
1895 - 1915	$0.485 \times \frac{3,80}{100} \times \frac{58}{100} = \frac{105}{100}$	27 years
1916 - 1935	$0.485 \times \frac{4,50}{100} \times \frac{59}{100} = \frac{125}{100}$	27 years

/524/

161 Thus during the period 1895 to 1925, the Boni population
[128] doubled with each generation. These results are confirmed by
(173) the study of the genealogies. The present-day Boni, with the
[613] exception of about 5% of them who belong to recently founded lineages, are descended by known filiation from seven women who lived at the end of the eighteenth century.

It is possible that before the period to which this inquiry refers epidemics were produced and struck certain villages in particular, destroying entire lineages. In fact we cannot say anything certain about the evolution of the population before 1890. Let us only remember that this rate of reproduction of 200% per generation of 31 years represents the normal rate for the Refugee Blacks, in the absence of large epidemics and of venereal diseases and before any medical aid.

During the period 1925-1942, the Boni population did not vary (rate of reproduction $\frac{105}{100}$).

Since 1940, it has been increasing slightly, by 25% per 27 years, that is just under 1% per year.

163 Birth rate and mortality rate. Demographic balance. From 1
● 165 January 1956 to 31 December 1957, i.e., in two years, 39 children were born in the villages on the French bank (660 persons); and 21 persons died (including 5 children born during this period).

Rate of birth: 2.9% per year.

Rate of mortality: 1.6% per year.

161 Rate of increase: 1.3% per year.

The rate of increase of 1.3%, which corresponds incidentally to the theoretical calculation indicated above, is very much below that of the population of Cayenne and of the communes of
[164] the coast. If one considers that before 1920 it reached the remarkable value of 3% per year, one realizes the extent of the disaster brought about by venereal diseases.

/524 cont./

165 Factors influencing the demographic characteristics of the Boni. Life expectancy at birth for the Boni is not only 12 years higher than that of the Indians, but is also considerably higher than that of the African peoples from which they came.

This fact can be attributed to two causes:

164 1. The Boni live in a more salubrious environment than
182 the African forest and have better living conditions. It seems li[illegible]r the Guianese forest, apart from malaria, presents few [illegible]s of bad health and is relatively favorable to man; the absence of trypanosomiasis permits men /525/ to gather on the banks of the large rivers, generously exposed to the air and to the light. The small number of the Boni and their dispersion over a vast territory stands in the way of the transmission of diseases by drinking water. In fact the water is generally healthy. Dysentery and parasitosis are considerably rarer and less serious than in Africa;

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162 2. The Boni are a selected population. This is a very important aspect of their demography.

The slaves were the object of a systematic selection; the purchasing commissions of the rich colony of Surinam allowed only individuals of good health and constitution to pass. A second selection took place at the time of the formation of the tribes of Refugee Blacks. More than from a massive rebellion the rebel groups increased in size by the addition of those who, from year to year, escaped at the peril of their lives. Without any doubt those who preferred combat to servitude were the most vigorous and bravest. Voluntary migrations have always been a factor of selection: one may suppose that a migration which took place in such circumstances was accompanied by a particularly rigorous selection which, in spite of the time which has passed (eight generations), continues to influence the physiological
[734] characteristics of the Refugee Blacks. Notably it can explain
[157] the vigorous constitution of the Boni (there are only two congenital invalids out of 810 persons) and their exceptional qualities of physical courage and initiative.

R /528 cont./
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13. (cont.)
of the age pyramids relative to the ages of 28 and 56 years, taking into account the rate of reproduction of 83% per generation of 28 years.

B
R
165

It can be seen that there remain practically no survivors at 70 years of age, whereas among the Boni there still remain 30%.

Life expectancy at birth, deduced from this curve, is 31 years (Boni: 43 years.)

The mortality curve is very different from that of the Boni, showing a completely different appearance vis-à-vis the geographic environment. The mortality from 0 to 5 years appears comparable in the two populations (about 30%). But whereas among the Boni the curve shows a distinct plateau between 5 and 25 years, nothing similar is seen among the Oayana; the
R survival curve /529/ /Diagram 5 appears here/ plunges rapidly
165 without showing any plateau. The Oayana have, generally speaking, the same probability of death at every age. This high mortality of adolescents and young adults is a remarkable characteristic, clearly linked to the particular pathology of the Indians of the forest.

R
161 Rate of reproduction. The proportion surviving at 28 years of age, the age at which half of the children have been born, is about 47%.

The rate of reproduction is thus:

$$0.485 \times \frac{3.62}{100} \times \frac{47}{100} = \frac{83}{100} \text{ in 28 years.}$$

Thus 100 persons are replaced in the following generation by only 83. The whole drama of the Indians of the Guianese forest is expressed by this figure.

/529 cont./

B R 165

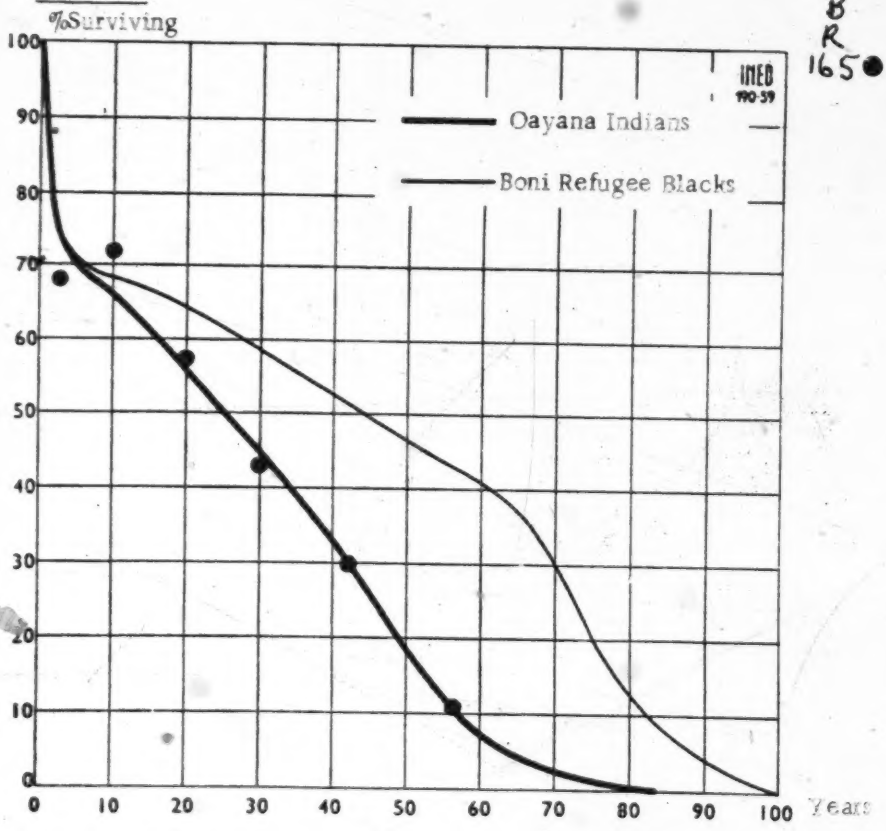

Diagram 15. 8. Curve of survival for the Oayana Indians

/530/

B R 161

This rate of reproduction of 83% characterizes their behavior vis-à-vis the geographic environment modified since the arrival of the Europeans by their contribution of new microbial germs, just as 200% characterizes the behavior of the Refugee Blacks.

R 161

Before any kind of medical aid the group described here was dying out at the rate of 0.6% per year, i.e., it decreased on the average by one person every year.

This rate corresponds to the extinction of half in 103 years. It is not quite adequate to explain the reduction of the Oayana from 3,000 around 1780 to 500 in 1958. It is probable that at the moment of the first contact with the Europeans, at the end of the eighteenth century, the Oayana must have been decimated by the epidemics more severely than in our day.

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[For additional demographic and social information, see the "Table of the Population of the Boni Villages," on pp. 479-539, category 116. Included are data on the number of children per woman, the number of deaths by age and sex, the name of the guardian (usually, but not necessarily a parent) who was responsible for raising a particular individual, personal names of the Boni, marital residence and residence changes by specific individuals, marriage practices, including polygynous unions and secondary marriages, cases of divorce, and lineage/sib affiliations of each individual.]

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[For additional data on the number of children per woman, mortality, Boni emigrants, and the village of residence of lineage/sib members, see the genealogical charts on pp. 542-575, category 116.]

/42/

125 The name of each individual is printed in boldface type
128 once where he can be considered as habitually residing.
162 Children under 15 are considered as living with the persons responsible for their education. If it was not possible to obtain accurate information about this, they are considered as living with their mother.

Each listing bears a number, for example Dju D7, making it possible to find again the individual's place in the genealogical table. In the example noted, refer to the table of the Dju lineage, line D, no. 7.

601 Genealogical tables. These are of unequal value according to the
128 age and the memory of the old people consulted. In general
[115] they go back to three generations beyond the oldest of the old men now alive.

[165] Since the Boni show remarkable longevity, and the average difference in age between two generations can be estimated at 31 years, one can assume as probable that the most distant ancestress known of each lineage was born between the middle and the end of the 18th century. For example, if we assume that
[613] Kuluba, the ancestress of the Awara Bakka, was about 100 years old in 1956, we can take for granted that she was born about 1856 and that her great-grandmother was born about 1760.

613 The most ancient ancestress known of each lineage is certainly not the foundress. It is infinitely probable that the founding of these groups goes back to the beginning of the 18th century and that they were born on the same plantations where the ancestors of the Refugee Blacks were slaves; this would explain the names borne by the lineages, names which nearly always allude to a plantation or to a slave-owner.

601 In a general way, the memory of the Boni is very sure,
128 and the information given in the form: Ma X... begot So-and-so,

/70 cont./

643 613 In 1957 the Dikan lineage was practically extinct. There remained only Grand Man Difu and his elder brother Samalobi, very old.

[829] The present grand man does not know the genealogy of his lineage beyond his grandmother. /Fig. 14 appears here./ /71/

[648] At the death of Awensay it was Samalobi, eldest of Awensay's classificatory nephews, who was to be named; but the French administration thought they had to oppose it, judging him too old; he yielded with good grace.

613 [165] [554] Samalobi, the ancestor, the patriarch of the Boni, died in May, 1957 at over 100 years old. Although very weakened by his infirmities and nearly blind, he kept great prestige and no important decision was made without his consent.

173 The son of Apatu, companion of Crevaux, he had retained an exact memory of the explorer whom he had accompanied during part of his trip in 1877. It is thanks to his memories that Crevaux's prestige has remained so great on the Maroni.

643 692 578 The grand man judges without appeal disputes between members of different lineages. Truly serious affairs are extremely rare, if one keeps in mind that:

[613] [583] [586] --Disputes over the payment of dowry, paying it back in case of divorce, and the assignment of the children, which form the main part of the cases argued before ordinary African jurisdictions, do not exist among the Refugee Blacks;

643 613

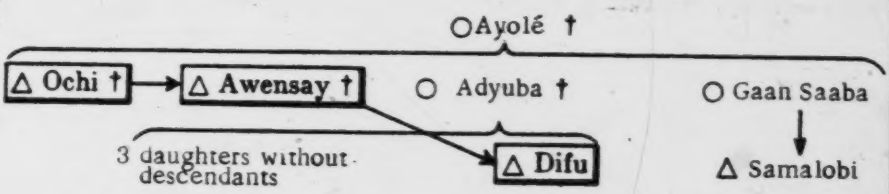

Fig. 14. Filiation of the last three grand men of the Boni.

/127 cont./

429 593 [586] are his or not, he maintains them indirectly by maintaining his wife. He has only precarious authority. Every connection with the children disappears in case of divorce.

429 603 [604] [593] Guardianship is often exercised by the maternal grandmother, by an aunt, or even by an older sister.

If the maternal grandmother (or the great-grandmother if she is still living) insists on bringing up a child, the mother cannot refuse; one sees a rather large number of cases of women who have only one child and have given it to their mother to raise; it is true that since they live together, it is not a great sacrifice for the mother.

429 603 888 [163] [165] Thus one sees women over 70 years old, having had ten children or so, bringing up three or four of their grandchildren. The ancestress of Asisi village, Kuluba († 1957), after having had 12 children, brought up about ten of her children and grandchildren during the course of her long existence; when she died in 1957 at 100 years of age, she was still raising a child, one of her great-grandsons 12 years old. Of course she had not been working any more for a long time and was fed by her family, as the child was. But it was she who held the power of guardianship over him.

429 593 If it is the father who is charged with the child's education, he takes him into his own maternal family. His sisters will help him to bring up the child as long as he needs the presence of a woman.

From then on the father will exercise guardianship corresponding to that which the mother usually exercises under the responsibility of the uncles.

Sometimes a man is seen bringing up a daughter. Generally speaking, if a man /128/ has had three or more children by one woman, it is considered normal for him to be given one to raise, but that does not constitute a right; he cannot demand anything.

/198 cont./
167 754 old woman of 90, A..., who died in Asisi in January, 1957. Having lived with Creoles in her youth, she had come back to live in her native village for at least 30 years and had never given occasion for any unfavorable remark. Nevertheless, upon her death it appeared that she had wisi.

771 829 179 [797] Attitude toward Christianity. The Refugee Blacks, who are acquainted better than one might believe with the conceptions of the populations in the midst of whom they live, have a clear feeling of the relationship which exists between their metaphysical and moral conceptions and those of Christianity. They think they worship the same god as the Christians, in a completely different way but just as sound. They have no animosity whatever toward the Catholic and Protestant clergy, and most of them agree willingly to wearing crosses or medals. But they have not the least intention of abandoning their beliefs for that. They do not perceive the contradiction and do not understand that people might want to oblige them to choose.

851 171 165 797 [688] [203] [784] Like the Creole gold miners, they attach great importance to baptism, considered as an obia protective against the dangers of the bush. On Christmas, 1957 they were strongly impressed by the accidental death of a Djuka Christian living at the Kotika school. He refused to observe mourning for his wife according to the custom of the Refugee Blacks, and used to go to drink in the cabarets of the Creole villages. On Christmas evening, when drunk, he drowned himself. That was attributed to a suprahuman punishment. We heard /199/ the following reflection on this subject: "He was baptized and he drowned himself just the same. That is therefore not worth the trouble."

61 581 591 Actually, the matrilineal structure of the Refugee Blacks and their conception of marriage form an irreducible cleavage, which appears immediately as soon as one leaves the metaphysical conceptions to pass to the plane of practical living.

754 /240 cont./
755 will be obliged to confess: "It is I who killed So-and-So and
787 So-and-So." They immediately inform the grand man, who
754 orders the usual procedure against wisimã: Ceremonies are
766 suspended, the body is transported by boat to a place reserved for cursed people, downstream from Boni country, and it is abandoned in the bush without being buried. Grand Man Difu is trying to modify this custom and to compel burial of wisimã in a special cemetery, but without great success up to now, it seems.

754 There is no broko dɛ. The spouse may remarry immediate-
765 ly. Since the property of the deceased are presumed to be ill-
768 gotten, inheritance is cancelled. The house is destroyed and thrown into the water, the boat abandoned to the current. Personal belongings of the deceased are turned over to the grand man who distributes them to whom he wishes.

The near relatives of persons thus designated are overcome with shame but can say nothing. Not a bit of responsibility is imputed to them.

754 How does society protect itself against the sorcery of the
755 wisimã from beyond the grave? According to Grand Man Difu,
784 this is a problem which does not come up. The wisimã has been killed by Odun as punishment for his crimes. Since every being draws its force from the divine, he has no more force, he is destroyed as a being, he is no longer anything but an empty shadow incapable of doing harm.

754 In fact, among the Refugee Blacks these trials of dead
755 people are very rare. Whereas about 15 persons die per year
787 on the average in Boni country, including about ten adults,
• [165] in the last 20 years (1) only about 20 persons were revealed to be wisimã.

1. Disregarding the period 1957-1959 when a definite fresh outbreak of the fear of wisimã was observed.